THE DELUGE

By DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS, Author of "THE COST," etc

XV.

TRAPPED AND TRIMMED.

There are two kinds of dangerous temptations—those that tempt us, and those that don't. Those that don't, give us a false notion of our resisting power, and so make us easy victims of the others. I thought I knew myself pretty thoroughly, and I believed there was nothing that could tempt me to neglect my business. With this delusion of my strength firmly in mind, when Anita became a temptation to neglect business, I said to myself: "To go up town during business hours for long lunches, to spend the mornings selecting flowers and presents for her—these things look like neglect of business, and would be so in some men. But I couldn't neglect business. I do them because my affairs are so well ordered that a few hours of absence now and then make no difference—probably send me back fresher and clearer."

When I left the office at half-past twelve on that fateful Wednesday in June, my business was never in better shape. Textile common had dropped a point and a quarter in two days—evidently it was at last on its way slowly down toward where I could free myself and take profits. As for the coal enterprise nothing could possibly happen to disturb it; it was all ready for the first of July announcement and boom. Never did I have a lighter heart than when I joined Anita and her friends at Sherry's. It seemed to me her friendliness was less perfunctory, less a matter of appearances. And the sun was bright, the air delicious, my health perfect. It took all the strength of all the straps Monson had put on my natural spirits to keep me from being exuberant.

I had finally intended to be back at my office half an hour before the exchange closed—this in addition to the obvious precaution of leaving orders that they were to telephone me if anything should occur about which they had the least doubt. But so comfortable did my vanity make me that I forgot to look at my watch until a quarter to three. I had a momentary qualm; then, reassured, I asked Anita to take a walk with me. Before we set out I telephoned my right-hand man and partner, Ball. As I had thought, everything was quiet; the exchange was closing with textile sluggish and down a quarter. Anita and I took a car to the park.

We walked for an hour, talking with less constraint and more friendliness than ever before, and when I left her I, for the first time, felt that I had left a good impression.

When I entered my offices, I, from force of habit, mechanically went direct to the ticker—and dropped all in an instant from the pinnacle of heaven into a boiling inferno. For the ticker was just spelling out these words: "Mowbray Langdon, president of the Textile association, sailed unexpectedly on the Kaiser Wilhelm at noon. A 2 per cent raise of the dividend rate of textile common, from the present 4 per cent to 6 has been determined upon."

And I had staked up to, perhaps beyond my limit of safety that textile would fall!

Ball was watching narrowly for some sign that the news was as bad as he feared. But it cost me no effort to keep my face expressionless; I was like a man who has been killed by lightning and lies dead with the look on his face that he had just before the bolt struck him.

"Why didn't you tell me this," said I to Ball, "when I had you on the 'phone?" My tone was quiet enough, but the very question ought to have shown him that my brain was like a schooner in a cyclone.

"We heard it just after you rang off," was his reply. "We've been trying to get you ever since. I've gone everywhere after textile stock. Very few will sell, or even lend, and they ask—the best price was ten points above to-day's closing. A strong tip's out that textiles are to be rocketed."

Ten points up already—on the mere rumor! Already ten dollars to pay on every share I was "short"—and I short more than two hundred thousand! I felt the claws of the fiend Ruin sink into the flesh of my shoulders. "Ball doesn't know how I'm fixed," I remember I thought, "and he mustn't know."

I lit a cigar with a steady hand and waited for Joe's next words.

"I went to see Jenkins at once," he went on. Jenkins was then first vice-president of the textile trust. "He's all cut up because the news got out—says Langdon and he were the only ones who knew, so he supposed—says the announcement wasn't to have been made for a month—not till Langdon returned. He has had to confirm it, though. That was the only way to free his crowd from suspicion of intending to rig the market."

"All right," said I.

"Have you seen the afternoon paper?" he asked. As he held it out to me, my eye caught big textile headlines, then flashed to some others—something about my going to marry Miss Ellersly.

"All right," said I, and with the paper in my hand, went to my outside office. I kept on toward my inner office, saying over my shoulder—to the stenographer: "Don't let anybody interrupt me." Behind the closed and locked door my body ventured to come to life again and my face to reflect as much as it could of the chaos that was heaving in me like ten thousand warring devils.

Three months before, in the same situation, my gambler's instinct would probably have helped me out. For I had not been gambling in the great American Monte Carlo all those years without getting used to the downs as well as to the ups. I had not—and have not—anything of the business man in my composition. To me, it was wholly finance, wholly a game, with excitement the chief factor and the sure winning, whether the little ball rolled my way or not. I was the financier, the gambler and adventurer; and that had been my principal asset. For, the man who wins in the long run at any of the great games of life—and they are all alike—is the man with the cool head; and the only man whose head is cool is he who plays for the game's sake, not caring greatly whether he wins or loses on any one play, because he feels that if he wins to-day, he will lose to-morrow. But now a new factor had come into the game. I spread out the paper and stared at the headlines: "Black Matt To Wed Society Belle—The Bucket-Shop King Will Lead Anita Ellersly To The Altar." I tried to read the vulgar article under whose vulgar lines, but I could not. I was sick, sick in body and in mind. My "nerve" was gone. I was no longer the free lance; I had responsibilities.

That thought dragged another in its train, an ugly, grinning imp that leered at me and sneered: "But she won't have you now!"

"She will! She must!" I cried aloud, starting up. And then the storm burst—I raged up and down the floor, shaking my clenched fists, gnashing my teeth, muttering all kinds of furious commands and threats—a truly ridiculous exhibition of impotent rage. For through it all I saw clearly enough that she wouldn't have me, that all these people I'd been trying to climb up among would kick loose my clinging hands and laugh as they watched me disappear. They who were none too gentle and slow in disengaging themselves from those of their own lifelong associates who had reverses of fortune—what consideration could "Black Matt" expect from them? And she—the necessity and the ability to deceive myself had gone, now that I could not pay the purchase price for her. The full hideousness of my bargain for her dropped its veil and stood naked before me.

At last, disgusted and exhausted, I flung myself down again, and dumbly and helplessly inspected the ruins of my projects—or, rather, the ruin of the one project upon which I had my heart set. I had known I cared for her, but it had seemed to me she was simply one more, the latest, of the objects on which I was in the habit of fixing my will from time to time to make the game more deeply interesting. I now saw that never before had I really been in earnest about anything, that on winning her I had staked myself, and that myself was a wholly different person from what I had been imagining. In a word, I sat face to face with that unfathomable mystery of sex-affinity that every man laughs at and mocks another man for believing in, until he has himself felt it drawing him against will, against reason, and sense, and interest, over the brink of destruction yawning before his eyes—drawing him as the magnet-mountain drew Sindbad and his ship.

But—it is not in me to despair. There never yet was an impenetrable siege line; to escape, it is only necessary by craft or by chance to hit upon the moment and the spot for the sortie. "Ruined!" I said aloud. "Trapped and trimmed like the stupidest sucker that ever wandered into Wall street! A dead one, no doubt; but I'll see to it that they don't enjoy my funeral."

XVI.

A GENTEEL "HOLD-UP."

In my childhood at home, my father was often away for a week or longer, working or looking for work. My mother had a notion that a boy should be punished only by his father; so, whenever she caught me in what she regarded as a serious transgression, she used to say: "You will get a good whipping for this, when your father comes home." At first I used to wait passively, suffering the torments of ten thrashings before the "good whipping" came to pass. But soon my mind began to employ the interval more profitably. I would scheme to escape execution of sentence; and, though my mother was a determined woman, many's the time I contrived to change her mind. I am not recommending to parents the system of delay in execution of sentence; but I must say that in my case it was responsible for an invaluable discipline. For example, the textile tangle.

I knew I was in all human probability doomed to go down before the stock exchange had been open an hour the next morning. All textile stocks must start many points higher than they had been at the close, must go steadily and swiftly up. Entangled as my reserve resources were in the coal deal, I should have no chance to cover my shorts on any terms less than the loss of all I had. At most, I could hope only to save myself from criminal bankruptcy.

There was no signal of distress in my voice as I telephoned Corey, president of the Interstate Trust company, to stay at his office until I came; there was no signal of distress in my manner as I sallied forth and went down to the Power Trust building; nor did I show or suggest that I had heard the "shot-at-sunrise" sentence, as I strode into Roebuck's presence and greeted him. I was assuming, by way of precaution, that some rumor about it's bound to be, no matter who announces it and invites subscriptions."

As I thus proposed that I be in a jiffy caught up from the extremely humble level of reputed bucket-shop dealer into the highest heaven of high finance, that I be made the official spokesman of the financial gods, his expression was so ludicrous that I almost lost my gravity. I suspect, for a moment he thought I had gone mad. His manner, when he recovered himself sufficiently to speak, was certainly not unlike what it would have been had he found himself alone before a dangerous lunatic who was armed with a bomb.

"You know how anxious I am to help you, to further your interests, Matthew," said he wheedlingly. "I know no man who has a brighter future. But—not so fast, not so fast, young man. Of course, you will appear as one of the reorganizing committee—but we could not afford to have the announcement come through any less strong and old established house than the National Industrial bank."

"At least, you can make me joint announcer with them," I urged.

"Perhaps — yes — possibly — we'll see," said he soothingly. "There is plenty of time."

"Plenty of time," I assented, as if quite content. "I only wanted to put the matter before you." And I arose to go.

"Have you heard the news of textile common?" he asked.

"Yes," said I carelessly. Then, all in an instant, a plan took shape in my mind. "I own a good deal of the stock, and I must say, I don't like this raise."

"Why?" he inquired.

"Because I'm sure it's a stock-jobbing scheme," replied I boldly. "I know the dividend wasn't earned. I don't like that sort of thing, Mr. Roebuck. Not because it's unlawful—the laws are so clumsy that a practical man often must disregard them. But because it is tampering with the reputation and the stability of a great enterprise for the sake of a few millions of dishonest profit. I'm surprised at Langdon."

"I hope you're wrong, Matthew," was Roebuck's only comment. He questioned me no further, and I went away, confident that, when the crash came in the morning, if comes it must, there would be no more astonished man in Wall street than Henry J. Roebuck. How he must have laughed; or, rather, would have laughed, if his sort of human hyena expressed its emotions in the human way.

From him, straight to my lawyers, Whitehouse & Fisher, in the Mills building.

"I want you to send for the newspaper reporters at once," said I to Fisher, "and tell them that in my behalf you are going to apply for an injunction against the textile trust, forbidding them to take any further steps toward that increase of dividend. Tell them I, as a large stockholder, and representing a group of large stockholders, purpose to stop the paying of unearned dividends."

Fisher knew how closely connected my house and the textile trust had been; but he showed, and probably felt no astonishment. He was too experienced in the ways of finance and financiers. It was a matter of indifference to him whether I was trying to assassinate my friend and ally, or was feinting at Langdon, to lure the public within reach so that we might, together, fall upon it and make a battue.

Not without some regret did I thus arrange to attack my friend in his absence. "till," I reasoned, "his blunder in trusting some leaky person with his secret is the cause of my peril—and I'll not have to justify myself to him for trying to save myself." What effect my injunction would have I could not foresee. Certainly it could not save me from the loss of my fortune; but, possibly, it might check the upward course of the stock long enough to enable me to snatch myself from ruin, and to cling to firm ground until the coal deal drew me up to safety.

My next call was at the Interstate Trust company. I found Corey waiting for me in a most uneasy state of mind.

"Is there any truth in this story about you?" was the question he plumped at me.

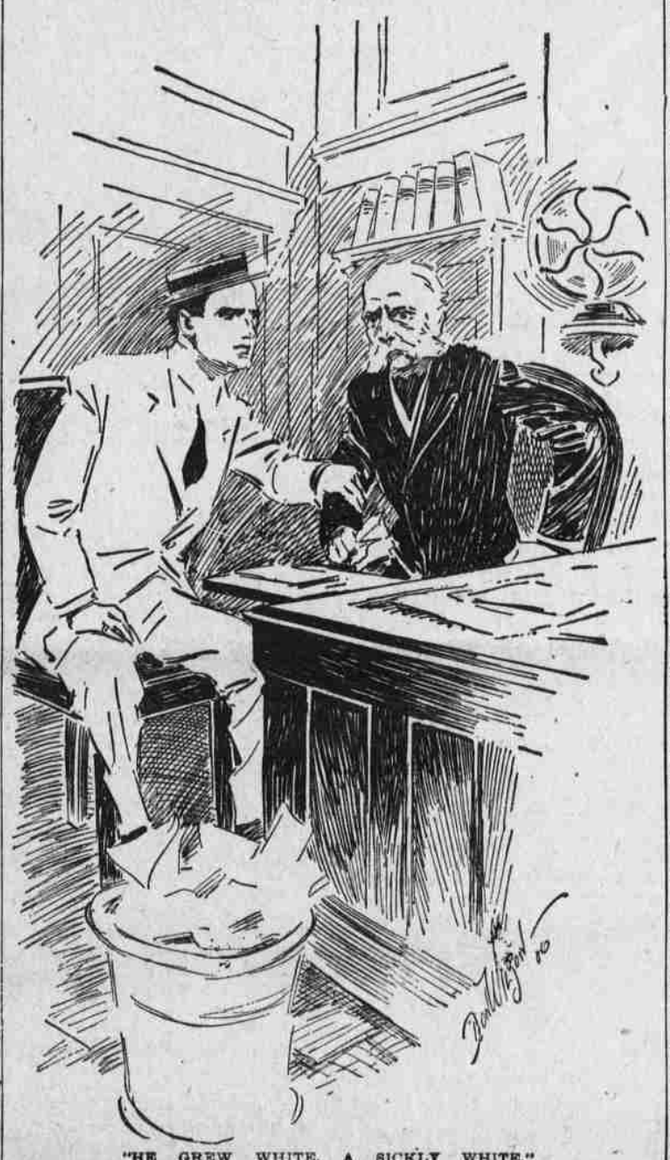
"What story?" said I, and a hard fight I had to keep my confusion and alarm from the surface. For, apparently, my secret was out.

"That you're on the wrong side of the textile."

So it was out! "Some truth," I admitted, since denial would have been useless here. "And I've come to you for the money to tide me over."

He grew white, a sickly white, and into his eyes came a horrible, drowning look.

(To be Continued.)



"HE GREW WHITE, A SICKLY WHITE."

Believe or Not, As You Will

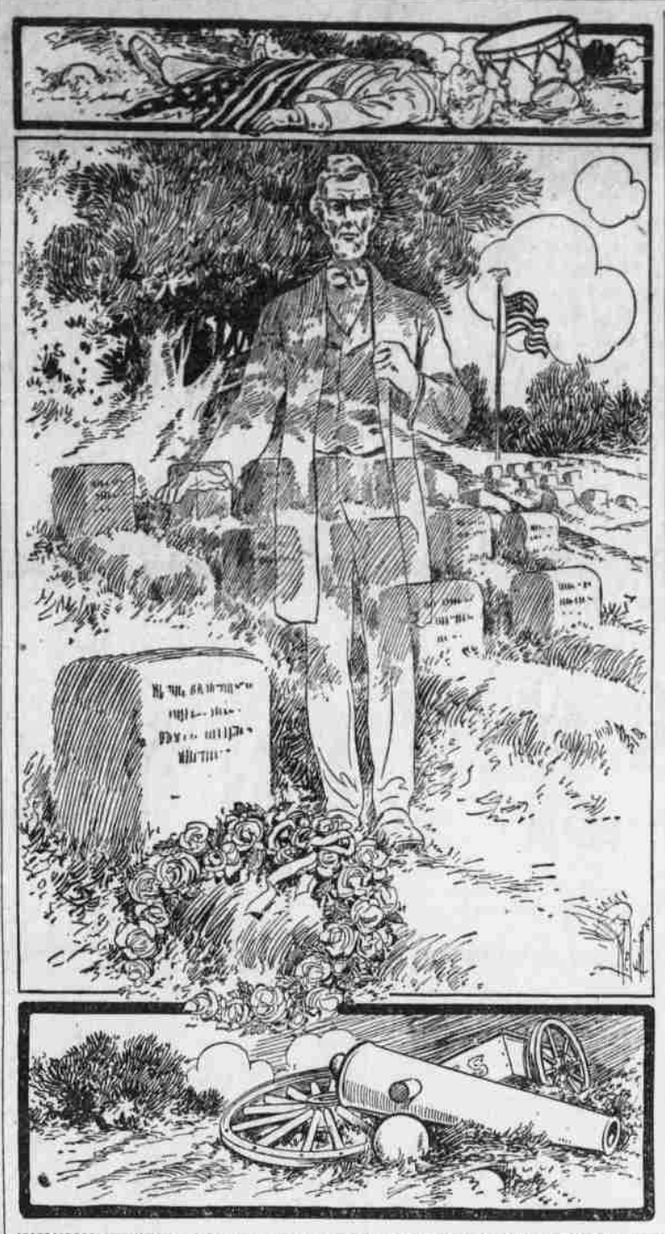
Anyway, the Man Who Wrote the Story Says He Saw the Eggs.

Colonel Adoniram Van Rensselaer, Mrs. Colonel Adoniram, Van Rensalaer and daughters, Miss Angelina Clementina and Miss Dorothea Dulcinea of Mocking Bird ranch, Screech Owl township, came to town in the cool of the morning in their forty-horse power auto to do a little trading, the colonel and the Mrs. Colonel calling to see us, as everybody does. It seems that Miss Angelina Clementina's French maid has a great liking for poultry, and to please her fancy the colonel imported a setting of high-priced French eggs.

In the poultry yard is a low, swampy spot that seems to be the home of the firefly, or lightning bug, and one particular helpful hen stays out late of evenings to catch them. She gorges herself on fireflies every evening, before going to roost, and it was discovered a few weeks ago that the eggs laid by this helpful hen are nocturnally luminous, that each egg is of the brightness of an electric bulb of a thousand international ohms, or electro-magnetic units, and that by coating them with an impervious preparation they retain their brilliancy for an indefinite period. So Miss Angelina and Miss Dorothea painted the eggs with all the colors of the rainbow—blue lights for the blue rooms, red for the red rooms, white lights for the rooms done in white, green lights for the hay mow, always observing the proper effects.

The seventeen rooms of the home, the barn and outbuildings are all brilliantly lighted with these eggs, so the buildings, which occupy a prominent tree-embowered and vine-entangled hill, can be seen for miles. We accompanied Colonel Van Rensselaer to the city garage, where his forty-horse power auto was. Each headlight of the machine carried an egg instead of a lamp. Taking one of the eggs into a dark room, the light thrown off from it was of the brightness of the sun, and we were at once convinced of the truthfulness of the story.—T. B. Murdock.

Comparatively few people know that ringing a bell ruins it. That is, a bell has a definite length of life, and after so many blows will break. A 900 pound bell, struck blows of 178 foot pounds of force, broke after 11,000 blows. A 4,000 pound bell broke after 18,000 blows of 350 foot pounds force. A steel composition bell weighing 1,000 pounds broke after 24 blows of 150 foot pounds, but its maker said it was calculated for a lighter blow.



A FLAG OF TRUCE

By Daniel Cleverton

As BOY and man, Col. Bryant had been a soldier. As a boy his ambition had been a cadetship at West Point, and the army as a life career. Blessed with wealthy parents, there seemed nothing in the way to the accomplishment of his ideal when the opportune time arrived. At 15 he began a course of study that would fit him to pass the required examination and admit him to the United States military academy. At 18 the opportunity came. There was a vacancy at the academy to be filled by appointment from his congressional district, and he entered eagerly into the competition for the coveted place, feeling confident of winning the prize.

His most formidable opponent was Billy Edwards, the son of a struggling clergyman, into whose path fate had thrown no special opportunities, but who had improved every chance for study that had been given him, and who wished the appointment merely as a means of securing a desired education.

The two had never been friendly, and on one of two occasions had had some boyish quarrels over the attentions each had attempted to bestow upon Blossom Nathan. When Billy Edwards won the coveted appointment every semblance of friendship between the two boys ceased, and Bob Bryant refused even to associate with anyone who called young Edwards their friend.

Grievously disappointed in not winning the cadetship, young Bryant entered a military academy with a determination to prepare himself for a military career, trusting to his father's wealth and influence to secure for him an appointment to the army.

During their school days both boys kept up a correspondence with Blossom Nathan, until at the end of three years Bryant insisted that she could not retain the friendship of both he and Edwards, and that all correspondence between her and his rival must cease, or her would have nothing more to do with her. The young lady very promptly informed her angry suitor that she would choose her own friends, and he accepted her decision.

Six months after Lieut. Edwards had graduated from West Point and entered the army he made Blossom Nathan his wife, and took her to the western post, where his command was stationed.

Bryant in the mountains had finished his college course, and not finding it so easy to secure a civil appointment to the army, had settled down to the study of law in his home town, and confined his military ambitions to a place in a local company of state guards.

Then came the call to arms to save the union. The southern states had seceeded; the flag had been fired upon. Every available company of the regular service had been rushed

Beside the White Stone.

eastward for the defense of Washington. Volunteers in companies, battalions and regiments were flocking into the mustering camps. With the volunteers went Bob Bryant as captain of his company. With the regulars sent to Washington went First Lieut. Edwards, while Mrs. Edwards went back to her old home to await the return of her husband from the front.

The four years of war dragged wearily along. Lieut. Edwards stuck to the regular service and rose to the rank of major, and brevet lieutenant colonel, as which he commanded his regiment. Capt. Bryant of the volunteer service rose to the rank of colonel.

At the battle of Gettysburg Col. Bryant was temporarily in command of a brigade stationed at Cemetery Hill. During the first day's fighting his command in company with all others at that point in the line of battle had suffered severely. With the reenforcements of the second day came the regiment commanded by Lieut. Col. Edwards, and during the fighting of that day Edwards fell and was buried on the field.

The war over, Col. Bryant found the wished for opportunity to enter the regular service, and was sent to the far west as a lieutenant of cavalry. For 12 years he followed the trail of the red man, and then "the good of the service" took him to Washington to serve for a time on the staff of the general commanding the army. It was this that accounted for his presence on the Gettysburg battlefield on Decoration day, 1878.

He walked over the ground so fiercely contested in '63 and glanced at the white headstones looking for the name of his comrades. At each grave there was planted a small flag, similar to one he carried idly in his hand. At one grave he noticed the frail staff had been broken, and the flag blown away. He stopped to read the name on the stone. It was: BVT. LIEUT. COL. WILLIAM EDWARDS.

Instantly all the old animosity of the years gone by returned. The man buried here had stolen from him his opportunity, had stolen the girl he loved and then there came to him the thought that this man had sacrificed his life for the flag; that this man had lost his life in bringing success to himself and his comrades, and had helped in saving them from probable annihilation at the hands of the enemy.

Reverently he stooped over the grave and planted the flag he carried beside the white stone. As he did so a woman's voice close behind him said:

"I thank you."

He turned. It was Blossom Nathan. The same Blossom, though a sad, sweet-faced woman now, instead of the chit of a girl he had known so many years ago. The years of exposure and hardship had changed him so she did not know him.

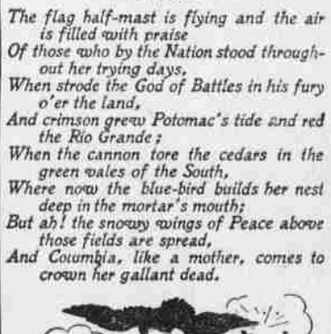
"It is my husband's grave," she explained. "The wind has evidently blown the flag away, and I have been looking for it, but without success. It seemed so lonely without a flag like the others."

"Blossom!" he cried. "Don't you know me?"

The voice brought back to her the days of her girlhood; the impetuous boyish lover.

She gave him her hand, and together they left that battlefield, where hope had died and hope was born again.

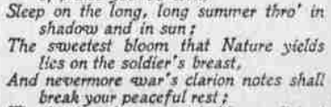
A few months later she again journeyed to the west to spend her life at an army post—a soldier's wife.



WHEN COLUMBIA CROWNS HER DEAD

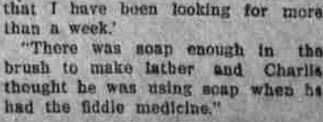
By T. C. HARBAUGH.

What has set the drums a-beating 'neath the tender skies of May?
Why troop the children from the fields with flowers fresh and gay?
I see the vet'rans gather in their buttoned coats of blue,
With here and there an empty sleeve to prove the wearer true;
I hear them talk of battles in their youthtime long ago,
Where side by side they stood and met the onslaughts of the foe;
And now the voice is silent, and each soldier bows his head,
For well they know this sacred day Columbia crowns her dead.



The flag half-mast is flying and the air is filled with praise
Of those who by the Nation stood throughout her trying days,
When strode the God of Battles in his fury o'er the land,
And crimson grew Potomac's tide and red the Rio Grande;
When the cannon tore the cedars in the green vales of the South,
Where now the blue-bird builds her nest deep in the mortar's mouth;
But ah! the snowy wings of Peace above those fields are spread,
And Columbia, like a mother, comes to crown her gallant dead.

No more I hear the rumble of the battle's brazen car,
I have to part the flowers fair to find the wounds of war;
I hear a robin singing where the colonel brav'ely died,
And a butterfly is hov'ring where the legions multiplied;
The bugle is no longer heard on fields we love to name,
And the roses bloom in beauty in the sacred camps of Fame,
And down the street a-marching, with Old Glory at their head,
Come the 'vet'rans, for Columbia bids them all salute her dead.



Sleep on, O wearers of the blue! the meed of praise you've won,
Sleep on the long, long summer thro' in shadow and in sun;
The sweetest bloom that Nature yields lies on the soldier's breast,
And nevermore war's clarion notes shall break your peaceful rest;
The battle echoes vanish like a distant cannon's boom,
Behold! Columbia gently lays a wreath upon a tomb,
"My chi dren! Peace be with you!" speaks she low with drooping head,
Then she kisses all the roses she has laid upon her dead.

Lieut. Col. Edwards Fell.

HE MADE A MISTAKE.

New Jersey Private Mistook Violin Resin for Shaving Soap.

"A soldier named Ed Morton," said a veteran from New Jersey, "was one of the quickest men with the fiddle I ever listened to, and he carried it with him to beguile camp life. A fellow named Charles Foster was his tent mate, who, having discovered a slight down on his chin, endeavored to coax it forward by frequent application of his razor.

"One day Charlie was boasting of a cake of shaving soap he had found, and said that he had used it twice, and had found it just fine. He offered to lend it to Morton. When the 'soap' was produced Morton exclaimed: 'Why, if there ain't my resin that I have been looking for more than a week.'

"There was soap enough in the brush to make lather and Charlie thought he was using soap when he had the fiddle medicine."

First Folding Envelope.

The folding envelope was first used in 1839.